United Nations A/AC.109/PV.1450

General Assembly

Official Records

Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

1450th Meeting

Monday, 17 July 1995, 10 a.m.

New York

Acting Chairman: Mr. Bangura . . . . . (Sierra Leone)

The meeting was called to order at 11.40 a.m.

Report of the Subcommittee on Small Territories, Petitions, Information and Assistance (A/AC.109/L.1829) *(continued)*

Questions of American Samoa, Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Guam, Montserrat, Pitcairn, St. Helena, Tokelau, Turks and Caicos Islands and United States Virgin Islands

Question of dissemination of information

The Chairman: As members will recall, the report of the Subcommittee was introduced at our 1442nd meeting. At that meeting, members requested that action on the draft resolutions contained therein be postponed to a later date so that they might be considered in conjunction with the report of the Caribbean Regional Seminar on the Mid-Term Review of the Plan of Action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, held at Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, from 3 to 5 July 1995 (A/AC.109/2030).

Members have now had the opportunity to study the report of the seminar. Are there any comments?

Mr. Chtcherbak (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): At the meeting of the Subcommittee on Small Territories, Petitions, Information and Assistance we adopted its report without a vote, which means that we have more or less of a consensus. At that time, my delegation raised the possibility of postponing consideration of this matter to the next session so that we could take account of the questions raised at the seminar held in Trinidad and Tobago. In this connection, my delegation has a number of minor technical amendments to the text of the report of the Subcommittee, which we would ask to be taken into account.

I refer to twelfth preambular paragraph of the omnibus draft resolution in paragraph 10 of the report (A/AC.109/L.1829), which deals with the usefulness of the participation of the representatives of the Territories in the work of the Special Committee. We ask that the article "the" in the second line, before the words "Non-Self-Governing Territories" be deleted, because not all representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories share that approach.

Turning now to the fourteenth preambular paragraph, we would like to bring its language into line with the resolutions adopted by the Special Committee. That would mean taking out the words "the most effective", so that the paragraph would begin:

(spoke in English)

> "Mindful that United Nations visiting missions provide means of ascertaining the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories",

(spoke in Russian)

and the text would continue as it stands.

95-85747 (E)

This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

I would recall that this was the language that was approved in our consensus resolution on visiting missions.

In addition, operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution contains a logical contradiction, and unfortunately my delegation has to apologize. We simply let that through. As you know, self-determination is a broad concept, and independence is just one possible version of it. So either we have to refer in this context to all possible expressions of self-determination or we have to make the language shorter and more general in nature. Our proposal, therefore, would be to remove the words "and independence" from this text. A similar amendment would need to be made to the fourth line of operative paragraph 12 for the same reasons.

Mrs. Cueto (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation would request clarification on the new wording proposed by the representative of Russia.

The Chairman: I believe his first suggestion was for the twelfth preambular paragraph to read as follows:

> "Aware of the usefulness, both to the Territories and to the Special Committee, of the participation of appointed and elected representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories in the work of the Special Committee."

Thus, he has proposed the deletion of the "the" before the words "Non-Self-Governing Territories".

I just wanted to ask the Russian representative about his proposal regarding operative paragraphs 2 and 12. Is the reference to "self-determination and independence" in conformity with the Charter? If it is, then do we need to remove the word "independence" after "self-determination"?

Mr. Chtcherbak (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): As you know, the principle of self-determination is a broad concept which implies the existence of a wide range of means to implement it. One such option is independence, but there are many other possibilities. If we take a careful look, for example, at the document adopted at the seminar, we find a clear reference to this. In paragraph 10 B, we find a list of options of self-determination available in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV). These include independence, free association with an independent State, integration with an independent State, association with a regional or subregional organization of independent States, and other possible options.

There can be very many such alternatives. Thus, my proposal was either to list all the possible options or to enunciate only the principle of self-determination itself, which means that the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories must themselves be given the opportunity to decide which of the various forms of self-determination is most suited to them. It would therefore be incorrect to mention in paragraphs 2 and 12 only one of the many options of self-determination. It would give the impression that we were imposing a single form of self-determination on the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, which would run contrary to our Committee's mandate. It is up to the peoples to make their choice.

It was on that premise that my delegation's proposal to remove the words "and independence" from paragraphs 2 and 12 was based.

Mrs. Cueto (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have listened to the proposal made by the representative of the Russian Federation. My delegation agrees with others in this Committee which are familiar with our procedures and working documents that the concept of self-determination can indeed encompass three aspects, among which is independence. In this respect, we accept the explanation of the representative of the Russian Federation.

We could therefore accept a reference exclusively to "self-determination", since it includes all the other options, which can thus be taken as implied. However, we should make it clear that, when we refer to independence, it is not with the aim of forcing matters or of imposing one of the options included within the concept of self-determination. Quite simply, if we were to undertake an exhaustive analysis of the wishes and requirements of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, it might well emerge that independence is among the demands of the Territories with which our Committee is concerned.

We can live with the expression "self-determination" alone. However, if we also talk of independence, it is because that has been the long-standing demand of many Non-Self-Governing Territories; in other words, we are not trying to impose any one particular view, but merely to reflect reality.

The Chairman: How do other members of the Committee feel? Do we retain the wording "in conformity with the Charter"? Or do we go along with the proposal of the Russian Federation to remove the words "and independence"?

Mr. Samadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Since this is in conformity with the Charter and the paragraph mentions that it is so, and since it has been the practice of the Committee for many years, I do not know why there should be a need to change language of the Committee that has been accepted. Since independence is one of the most important options of self-determination, I think that keeping the language of the Committee would be proper.

Mr. Mwambulukutu (United Republic of Tanzania): Let me thank our colleague from the Russian Federation for his usual useful contribution to our work.

On the points he has just raised, without any belabouring or complication or filibustering which could arise in discussions of this matter, I have noticed from experience that reference to independence has been quite annoying to a few delegations. Much as I would agree with our colleague from the Russian Federation that the mention of the word "independence" may not be that important and that we might perhaps make do with referring only to "self-determination" by implying or assuming that "independence" is subsumed within it, from my delegation's point of view the wording "self-determination and independence" is the correct reflection of what the Charter intends. Actually, if we look at the very name of this Committee, the priority reference is to independence. Of course, my delegation is fully aware of concessions and adaptations and takes recent developments into account, but I do not think it should amount to removing the substance of the resolutions for which this Committee stands and to which all Member States subscribe.

I would rather say that, as the representatives of Cuba and Iran have pointed out, the best compromise — if it is agreeable to my colleague from the Russian Federation — would be either to insert "independence" wherever "self-determination" appears, or to leave the draft as is. That is not a problem, because these references all have exactly the same meaning as resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV). The very cover of this report reads: Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples — not "Implementation of the Declaration on the Self-Determination of Colonial Countries and Peoples". Maybe we are belabouring this point, but nothing will be lost if we leave the text as it appears.

Though I participated in the Port of Spain seminar, I do not suppose that we could even try to take literally the recommendations made there. I think that it is up to this Committee to discuss progress and development, as our Russian colleague is suggesting, and to relay what was said at the seminar. Some of the things that were said were perhaps not expressed exactly as this Committee, as a United Nations body, would wish. Perhaps, therefore, on this question of self-determination and independence, we could retain the formulation in the text at hand.

Mr. Al-Attar (Syria) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I had wanted to speak earlier when this amendment was put forward to say that the report was amended several times in Subcommittee meetings and that we did arrive at a final text. We talked about rationalizing the work of our Committee and how it could save money on the numbers of documents it produces. The representative of the Russian Federation is now suggesting an amendment to a document that has already been adopted by the Subcommittee, so new costs would be incurred by the Secretariat. In view of that, I would hope that in future, amendments will be put forward at the proper time so that we truly can rationalize the work of our Committee.

The Chairman: I should like to make an appeal at this juncture. We are dealing here with usage, which does not exclude other possibilities or other realities, but, as we know, usage often lags behind changing realities. I would suggest then that we accept this usage, which is, in any case, correct and in conformity with the Charter.

Mr. Chtcherbak (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): First of all, my delegation is aware that the amendments we have introduced create certain difficulties as concerns the expenditures involved in reprinting or retyping the document. But we endeavour to make only amendments that do not have financial implications, not substantial changes that might entail additional costs. The elimination of just a few words is surely easy enough to take care of by issuing a revised version of the text. That should not cause any major problems.

As concerns substance, I would like to emphasize that this really is an important issue. If some delegations have difficulty with using the term "self-determination" without the words "and independence", it would be quite

easy for us to get around that. We could then list the other forms of self-determination contained in General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV). But our Committee cannot, in my view, single out from that listing just one possible form of self-determination and emphasize it, because I am far from convinced that we should try to impose anything upon anyone.

The position of principle of our delegation is that we must take account of the wishes of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, and that it would be incorrect on the part of the Committee to send them what would be, politically speaking, a radically wrong signal — in other words, singling out only one form of self-determination and bringing only that one to their attention. This is a very serious issue, and we have to understand that there is a lot at stake. We are talking about a resolution that should be general in nature and relevant to all Non-Self-Governing Territories. In this particular instance, in my delegation's opinion, it is important to make reference to the principle of self-determination. And if that is felt to be insufficient, let us then enumerate all the possible forms of self-determination. Then it will be clear that our Committee is not endeavouring to impose any particular point of view on anyone, that it is taking an objective approach to this matter and that it is guided in its work solely by the wishes of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

Mrs. Cueto (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Above all, my delegation wishes to ask you, Mr. Chairman, to do your utmost — even though we have been dealing with this question for some time already — to enable us to reach agreement on this amendment.

My delegation has stated that we could be flexible, on the understanding that the concept of self-determination can mean different things.

Other delegations have suggested that the reference to independence, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, is highly relevant to this paragraph. My delegation understands that argument.

Obviously, we lack agreed language because the representative who is offering amendments is, I must say, sometimes insensitive to the procedures, even to the very concept of the work and the spirit of the Committee.

Our having taken a given decision on the nature of the documents to be issued by the Committee need not imply that we necessarily have to agree with an amendment or proposed amendment to a word or phrase that would change the meaning, the nature and the mandate of the Committee. My delegation can be flexible, but we cannot understand how repeating the words "independence in conformity with the Charter" would create an obligation for or bind any State or any Territory. No: the concept of independence in conformity with the Charter is an obligation, a given; it is the recourse of any State or Non-Self-Governing Territory, for it is a concept enshrined in international relations.

Hence, Cuba does not agree that repeating the words "independence, in conformity with the Charter" amounts to imposing an obligation on anyone. We simply believe that Non-Self-Governing Territories that advocate self-determination will see the words "self-determination" as referring to them, and that Non-Self-Governing Territories that over the years have addressed this Committee in favour of independence will draw from this paragraph the explicit reference to "independence in conformity with the Charter". We are not prejudging or restricting anything. We are simply reflecting the facts. When we speak of independence it is not because we members of the Committee favour that option, but simply because we are reflecting a reality. If the representative of the Russian Federation wished it, Cuba could relate specific cases of Non-Self-Governing Territories that desire independence.

This reference neither binds nor offends anyone.

Mr. Chtcherbak (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): I believe I am right in thinking that our colleague from Cuba would have no objection to retaining only the language "self-determination", for we all understand what self-determination is and how many alternatives there are in the expression of the right of peoples to self-determination. I stress, moreover, that the paragraph includes a reference not only to the United Nations Charter but also to General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), which enumerates the main forms that self-determination can take. We would appear to be contradicting ourselves here.

We all understand that self-determination includes independence; it includes free association; it includes other options as well. So why in this paragraph should we single out only one of all these alternatives? This is completely incomprehensible to my delegation.

References to what we have been doing over the decades are beside the point. Our having grown

accustomed to a procedure does not necessarily make it right. If we now have an opportunity to improve our text and bring it in line with present-day circumstances — and actually to help the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories to determine their own future — then we should do so, amending our text and adapting it to the present situation. Let us consider the signal we would be sending: that out of all the possible forms of self-determination the Committee prefers just one. That is precisely why I propose that we should either remove the reference to independence or, in this case, enumerate all the possible forms of self-determination. This, we feel, would satisfy everyone.

Mr. Seniloli (Fiji): With regard to the inclusion of the reference to "independence", my delegation is of the opinion that if self-determination is described in line with paragraph 10 B of the report of the Trinidad and Tobago seminar, which includes independence and other options, then the inclusion here of the word "independence" is nothing but verbose. My delegation can do without the word "independence"; "self-determination" will suffice. In the draft resolution on the question of New Caledonia, the Committee came up with the wording

> "reaffirming the right of peoples to self-determination as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations" *(A/AC.109/L.1834, first preambular paragraph)*.

We might use that as a guide in this case.

Mr. Jenie (Indonesia): I should like to offer our views on the matter being discussed. As our Iranian colleague has said, we have used this wording for years. We do not think that by using it we are tying the hands of the Territories. With this phrase, along with the reference to General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), it is clear that independence is not the only option. At the same time, I agree with the representative of the Russian Federation that resolution 1514 (XV) envisages options other than independence.

Let me offer a way out by proposing a small amendment. The amended text would read as follows:

> "Reaffirms the inalienable right of the people of those Territories to self-determination, including independence, in conformity ...".

That clearly indicates that there are other options.

The Chairman: That suggestion seems to take care of both concerns: retaining the use of the word while at the same time taking cognizance of changing realities, and especially noting the various options.

Mr. Chtcherbak (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): My delegation has no problem with that proposal, on the understanding, of course, that in paragraph 12, which contains no reference to the Charter, the words "and independence" would be removed.

The Chairman: For the sake of consistency, I do not think there should be any difficulty about that. Is it the wish of the Committee? As I see no objection, I take it that, in operative paragraph 2 of the draft general resolution, "self-determination" will be followed by ", including independence," instead of "and independence" and that, in operative paragraph 12 of the same draft, "and independence" will be deleted, leaving just "self-determination".

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I call on the representative of Cuba.

Mrs. Cueto (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Shall we continue our discussion of the amendments proposed by the delegation of the Russian Federation, particularly those relating to the fourteenth preambular paragraph concerning visiting missions of the Committee?

My delegation would like to ask the delegation of the Russian Federation to be so kind as to repeat his proposal.

Mr. Chtcherbak (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): My proposal is simple. A few days ago the Committee approved a draft resolution on visiting missions. At that time we all thought it appropriate to delete the words "the most effective" in a context roughly similar to that of the present draft resolution. The reasons are perfectly understandable. As has already been pointed out in general discussion, visiting missions are just one of the means available. That is why, at that time, the Committee adopted a draft that did not contain the words "the most effective". It was on those grounds that, bearing in mind the discussions that the Committee had already had, my delegation proposed the deletion of these three words from this paragraph of the draft resolution that we are now considering.

The Chairman: If the problem arises from the words "the most effective" may I suggest the following:

"*Mindful* that United Nations visiting missions provide an effective means"?

That appears to be acceptable.

If there are no further comments may I take it that the Committee is prepared to take action on the draft resolution?

Mrs. Cueto (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Before we are asked to take decisions on this report I should like to ask you, Mr. Chairman, to be so kind as to clarify some matters and dispel some of our doubts.

The Committee has been waiting for the customary submission of two draft resolutions — one on economic activities and one on military activities in Non-Self-Governing Territories.

On Friday morning you, Mr. Chairman, were told that a majority of members of the Committee had reached agreement on the submission of two draft resolutions similar to those presented last year. Throughout Friday, despite the fact that it was a relatively simple job for the Secretariat, those documents were not issued. Neither did we receive them as official documents of the Committee this morning.

We would like the discussion of all remaining items to be postponed, since both draft resolutions are fundamental, as has always been the case in the Committee. Consequently, we consider that the draft resolutions, the report of the Subcommittee and the report of the seminar held in Trinidad and Tobago should be discussed together.

To our surprise, about 10 minutes after the Committee's nearly unanimous decision, two papers were introduced. However, neither of these has been published as an official document of this Committee. Documents introduced in such an unofficial way have no validity, either for this or for any other organ.

For that reason, before taking a decision on this report we request you, Mr. Chairman, to shed some light on the status of these two draft resolutions.

The Chairman: The representative of Cuba has taken great care to remind us about procedure. I am therefore sorry that we now have to proceed to another issue before completing consideration of the one currently under discussion.

Mr. Samadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): We have concluded our consideration of the Subcommittee's report. So far as we know, there is nothing more to do about it, and it is therefore ready for adoption. While I think that no delegation will have any difficulty with regard to this report, I suggest that we should put it aside for a moment and discuss action on the items relating to military and economic activities, which have some relevance to the reports on the various small Territories that the Secretariat has produced. I believe we should discuss these first or, at least, have the official versions of the draft resolution and the draft decision.

Unfortunately, these drafts are not yet ready, and, contrary to our expectations, they will not be ready today. We are waiting. Indeed, members of the Committee are ready — at least, my delegation is — to propose that on these two items we adopt a draft resolution and a draft decision the same as last year's. We want a chance to adopt the two drafts before taking a decision about the report of the Subcommittee.

The Chairman: I understand that the document symbols required will not be available until tomorrow. That is the only outstanding aspect of this matter. I suggest that we continue our discussion pending allocation of the symbols. In that way we could at least make good use of our time. Otherwise we shall have wasted today — and we do not want to be seen to be doing that.

I hope that what I have suggested is acceptable. We do have the documents, although they need to be completed with the addition of the symbols.

Mr. Samadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): May I ask once more whether these documents, with their symbols, will be ready tomorrow?

The Chairman: Yes, I am assured that they will be.

No meeting was scheduled for tomorrow, because the expectation was that we would complete our work today. So arrangements are now going to be made, if possible, to schedule a meeting for tomorrow.

Mrs. Cueto (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Perhaps in the future we will have the opportunity to

demonstrate that my delegation can be far more accommodating and less insistent than it has been at this session. Quite simply, we have had to deal with some rather unpleasant situations. That is why the voice of Cuba, like those of other delegations, has always been raised to make concrete requests and outline very clear positions.

You said, Sir, that no meeting was scheduled for tomorrow because we had hoped to finish today. Would you be kind enough to explain who had hoped to finish today? We have been told that ever since last Friday. The first thing my delegation did upon entering this room today was to request new documents. We have been awaiting two draft resolutions since Friday.

Cuba would like to make progress in the work of this Committee. However, in our capacity as a Member State, we have had the problem that, on some occasions, we have not been dealing with the right people. We have been dealing with the Secretariat over the dates on which documents will be issued and on which those documents which should already have been issued will be issued as official documents of the Committee.

We have tried to come to some agreement with you, Sir, because we recognize your well-known transparency and good will. But it is undeniable that our difficulties are increasing and that situations keep arising which we, as full members of this Committee, cannot accept.

The Chairman: We all want to complete our work as soon as possible. I would ask that we continue to show the tolerance we have always shown so that we can see this exercise through.

We still need symbols to be allocated to the documents in order to make them official. Then we will be able to complete our work.

Mr. Al-Attar (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The two draft resolutions before us appear to contain amendments. When the texts is circulated by the Secretariat, will it be the present draft, with the amendments? We do not know who submitted these amendments. Were they submitted by the Chairman or by one of the delegations? We want to know which draft will be submitted tomorrow. Will it have amendments, and if so, who submitted them?

The Chairman: The situation is as follows: In the past, the two draft resolutions were submitted by the Chairman. But the Committee is aware of the circumstances that have led to my assuming the responsibility of Acting Chairman.

As a result of those circumstances I asked for consultations to be conducted so that we could have a draft resolution. The representative of India undertook the consultations, as a result of which he was able to present the draft resolutions, which are the basis of the presentation to members. What we have before us, then, is the outcome of the consultations which the representative of India carried out on these two items.

Mrs. Cueto (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I believe my delegation can explain to the representative of Syria the consultation process that took place. We simply wish to point out that these consultations took place when the members of the Committee realized that we had reached the last day of the Committee's work and that no one from the Secretariat or the Bureau had informed or in any way explained to us what was to become of the two draft resolutions that have for years been the Committee's fundamental documents. We were therefore unable to have an exchange of views in the lamentable negotiation process which preceded the preparation of these documents, because they have yet to be presented formally.

The Chairman: I would recall that when we started the meeting I requested consultations to be held on these items. But I suppose the problem is the expectation that, as in the past, these draft resolutions would be submitted by the Chairman. That went by default, because they really should have been submitted not by the Chairman, but by delegations. Quite frankly, that is a practice that I would commend to representatives. Let us acknowledge that there have been difficulties. If we start from there, it would help us move forward.

Mrs. Cueto (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Cuba understands that, from this moment on — if I have understood you, Sir, and if that is the decision — it is the responsibility of the members of the Committee to introduce draft resolutions.

Nevertheless, we regret the fact that the lack of information in response to our request should have brought us to this pass.

Mr. Chtcherbak (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): Why have we begun to discuss this problem before completing our work on the Trinidad and Tobago seminar? My delegation was not

prepared to discuss these draft resolutions before completing work on the report of the seminar.

Let me emphasize that my delegation did not take part in the consultations held on the draft resolutions that have been submitted. Moreover, since, as everyone knows, all members of the Committee have the right to submit their own draft resolutions, independently of the Chairman, my delegation also introduced its own versions of elements of the draft resolution. We hope that those elements will also be taken into consideration in the discussion of this matter.

Mrs. Cueto (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The representative of the Russian Federation has put two questions to the Chair, rather than to me or to any other delegation. None the less, I should like to respond. First, we have been extremely flexible as we consider the reports. Cuba believes that in view of the situation surrounding these two draft resolutions we should defer consideration until September, even though we agreed to study the texts on the assumption that they would be submitted properly.

As to the second point of the representative of Russia, the Cuban delegation will accept — at future sessions, not at the present session — that we should not wait for the Chairman to submit a draft resolution. That is clear in principle. But as there was no prior notice of this, and as the Committee has agreed to it, I believe that at this session draft resolutions should continue to be submitted by the Chairman. Hence, this matter will be discussed on the basis solely of the Chairman's document, not on the basis of documents submitted by any delegation.

Mr. Mwambulukutu (United Republic of Tanzania): I thank you, Sir, for shedding light on the difficulties we have found ourselves in following the unavoidable changes that have been made. I assure you that my delegation fully supports your work and is grateful for your having generously accepted this responsibility at the eleventh hour.

What seems to be hindering our progress is the fact that the only text available thus far has been last year's resolution submitted by the Chairman, which the Secretariat has agreed to make an official working document of the Committee by tomorrow. At the same time, the side drafts based on consultations, in some of which my delegation participated, are equally important in our view: our consideration of the draft resolution just circulated, which is soon to become an official document, would be very much enriched by ideas from other delegations and other groups.

I also support the view of the delegation of Cuba that at this eleventh hour, and because all delegations without exception were a bit taken aback at not having before us the two draft resolutions in question, we should ask the Chairman to present the draft resolution as it is. We will then work on it and see how far we can get.

My delegation will be extremely flexible about what to do now. If we have an official document, we will be able to consider deferring discussion on the report of the Trinidad and Tobago seminar and on the draft resolutions to September, just before the opening of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

I hope this has been of some help.

Mr. Samadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I appreciate your efforts to solve the problem, Mr. Chairman.

I have a suggestion: our Syrian colleague has questioned the changes. My proposal is that since the Secretariat has not yet prepared an official draft text, last year's resolution, which was adopted by the Committee and then by the General Assembly by an absolute majority, could be reproduced as the text prepared by the Chairman for tomorrow or the day after. We could then discuss it here; we could improve it; or we could accept it. The easiest thing to do is reproduce last year's resolution as the Chairman's draft resolution and then discuss it, as we have discussed the other items on our agenda.

Mr. Chtcherbak (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): I do not yet know how we ought to proceed in this extremely difficult situation. It is already perfectly clear to my delegation that we cannot discuss the document that has been circulated because, as has been noted, it is not a draft resolution of the Chairman. In essence, it was prepared by a number of delegations, primarily, as I understand it, those of Cuba, Iran and India. We need then to record the fact that this draft resolution was introduced by those countries. In any case, reading through the document will immediately make it clear who the sponsors were. Therefore, if we intend to discuss this draft resolution, my delegation proposes that we specify which countries introduced it.

The Chairman: I should like to point out at this juncture that it was I who asked for consultations, that the draft resolutions we have are the result of those consultations, and that I, as Chairman, was going to

present those draft resolutions. I want that to be understood.

Mr. Viswanathan (India): That clarification was very useful. My consultations could not be completed because of time constraints and differing views in the Committee as to whether we should adopt a resolution now or later, and some confusion resulted. But I see no merit in going back. As you said, Sir, we have a situation to deal with. The representative of Iran suggested that the resolutions that were adopted by the General Assembly last year could be circulated as the Chairman's text, and we could then decide how it could be improved or amended. I think that is the way forward. And since we do not have many subjects to discuss, we could even forgo this afternoon's discussions to save time, circulate this text today or tomorrow morning, and discuss the draft resolutions tomorrow afternoon.

The Chairman: We must now decide on the suggestion, made by the representative of Iran and supported by the representative of India, that we take the resolution that has already been adopted and that I, as Chairman, will introduce it. Then tomorrow afternoon we will meet to discuss it and the other items on the agenda, if services are available.

In the meantime, I call on the Director of the General Assembly Affairs Division of the Department of Political Affairs, who will address the Committee.

Mr. Perfiliev (Director, General Assembly Affairs): In the Department of Political Affairs, and specifically in our division, General Assembly Affairs, we are very attentive to what is said in the Committees and working groups about the work of the Secretariat, which services this Committee. As members know, we have limited resources and a smaller staff as a result of budget cuts. The same staff that serviced only this Committee and Subcommittee and the Fourth Committee now services other working groups as well, but we try to do our best.

This year, unfortunately, a few months passed before the appointment of the Chairman of this Committee, who subsequently left. As the Acting Chairman has stated, we were for a time unsure of our liaison with the Committee through the Chairman, which caused some delays in our usual procedures as to drafts, documents and so on.

Nevertheless, we have some new faces in the Secretariat dealing with decolonization, as does this Committee, which has a new Secretary and a new Secretary of the Subcommittee. The Assistant Secretary-General of the Department, Mr. Alvaro de Soto, takes a great interest in the Committee's work. He has just returned from a long trip outside Headquarters and is ready to meet this week with the Committee at its earliest convenience. This is not the first time we have had this kind of contact; as members will recall, we have met with the Assistant Secretary-General before and discussed the wide range of issues before this Committee. We hope that the Secretariat, even with its limited resources, will be able to continue to provide the Committee with all the necessary services. This is true for the Committee as a whole, for the Bureau, for the Working Group, for the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman and also for all delegations.

Of course, the impartiality of the Secretariat in all areas is a rule, and we will continue to be attentive to any request from any delegation. We will try to help all members, and, through the Chairman of the Committee, we will do our best to avoid wasting time through the late submission of documents. As the Chairman has just said, the Secretariat is at the service of the Committee, the Chairman and the Bureau.

I truly appreciate all the remarks made here today, particularly those of the representative of Cuba. We have very good relations with that delegation in other Committees, and we appreciate its active involvement. This is a very good sign for us in the Secretariat. Members' comments help us better organize our work and set priorities in order fully to meet the Committee's expectations.

Mrs. Cueto (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): First, we wish to thank the Director for his kind words addressed to the members of the Committee and to the delegation of Cuba in particular. I was glad to hear him say that the Secretariat would continue to contribute to the work of the Committee.

We are also grateful for the information we have received, which serves as a warning: we were not aware that structural and budgetary reforms have progressed to the point where reductions in the Committee secretariat have already taken place.

My delegation will try to learn, either through the Fifth Committee or through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, the nature of these proposed reductions so that at the proper time and through the proper channels we can state our view that

the changes are already taking their toll on the work of the Committee.

Mr. Viswanathan (India): If I am right in my understanding that we have not yet adopted the report of the Subcommittee, I have a small amendment to propose.

The Chairman: As agreed, draft resolutions will be circulated before we meet tomorrow. Once they are before us, we will be in a position to continue with our agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.